



**For Immediate Release
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Moore County, NC

Southern Pines – Pinehurst Area is Ranked Highly in 'Economic Strength'

POLICOM Corporation has just released its 2006 Economic Strength Rankings for the 361 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and 577 Micropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States. On the list of the 577 Micropolitan Statistical Areas nationwide, Southern Pines-Pinehurst is ranked 29th which suggests that the area has a stable, but consistently growing economy, enabling residents to enjoy a higher quality of living.

“POLICOM’s ranking simply confirms what we’ve been emphasizing to prospective clients all along”, said Ray Ogden, Executive Director of Moore County Partners in Progress. “Thanks to a vibrant local economy, we have an exceptional standard of living here, and it’s a great place to start, relocate or expand a business.”

POLICOM is a Palm City, Florida-based independent economic research firm that analyzes local and state economies to determine if a particular economy is growing or declining and why. In its annual Economic Strength Rankings, POLICOM looks at Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs or METROS) and Micropolitan Statistical Areas (McrSAs or MICROS) and evaluates each individual area’s economic strength, or long-term tendency to consistently grow in both size and quality (standard of living). The higher the ranking, the more rapid and consistent the growth is over time.

Both Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas are geographically defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, based on the 2000 census. A MICRO, such as Southern Pines-Pinehurst, is an urbanized area, generally within one county, with a population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. METROS, in contrast, have at least one urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000 and also include adjacent territory that is socially and economically linked to the urbanized area. They generally encompass more than one county, such as the Raleigh-Cary MSA composed of Wake, Franklin and Johnston Counties. According to POLICOM, 82% of the U.S. population lives in METROS, while 11% live in MICROS.

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To rank the country's 577 MICROS, POLICOM evaluated 23 specific criteria in 3 groups. In Group 1, ten (10) criteria measure how much people earn, since growth in overall earnings generally means residents are enjoying a better standard of living because of a stronger economy.

In Group 2, nine (9) criteria look at employee earnings in small businesses, construction and retail since these industries tend to grow or decline in direct proportion to the condition of the economy.

In Group 3, four (4) "negative sectors", including per capita income maintenance (welfare) and per capita medical assistance (Medicaid), are analyzed. Growth in these sectors indicates a weak economy.

"Southern Moore County's economic strength is a catalyst for the phenomenal growth occurring right now in terms of residential construction and retail offerings. This stimulus, in turn, makes the area more attractive to entrepreneurs and business owners looking for a progressive location for their companies", said Ogden.

"This activity coupled with all of the exciting revitalization going on in Robbins in the northern part of the County is really going to continue to create a lot of positive economic opportunities for our communities. Partners in Progress looks forward to working with our partners -- the local governments, business leaders, and residents -- to turn these opportunities into more prosperity for our citizens."

To view the entire POLICOM 2006 Economic Strength Rankings, visit www.policom.com. Moore County Partners in Progress is the economic development organization for the County. For more information about Partners in Progress and economic development, please visit www.moorebusiness.org.

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